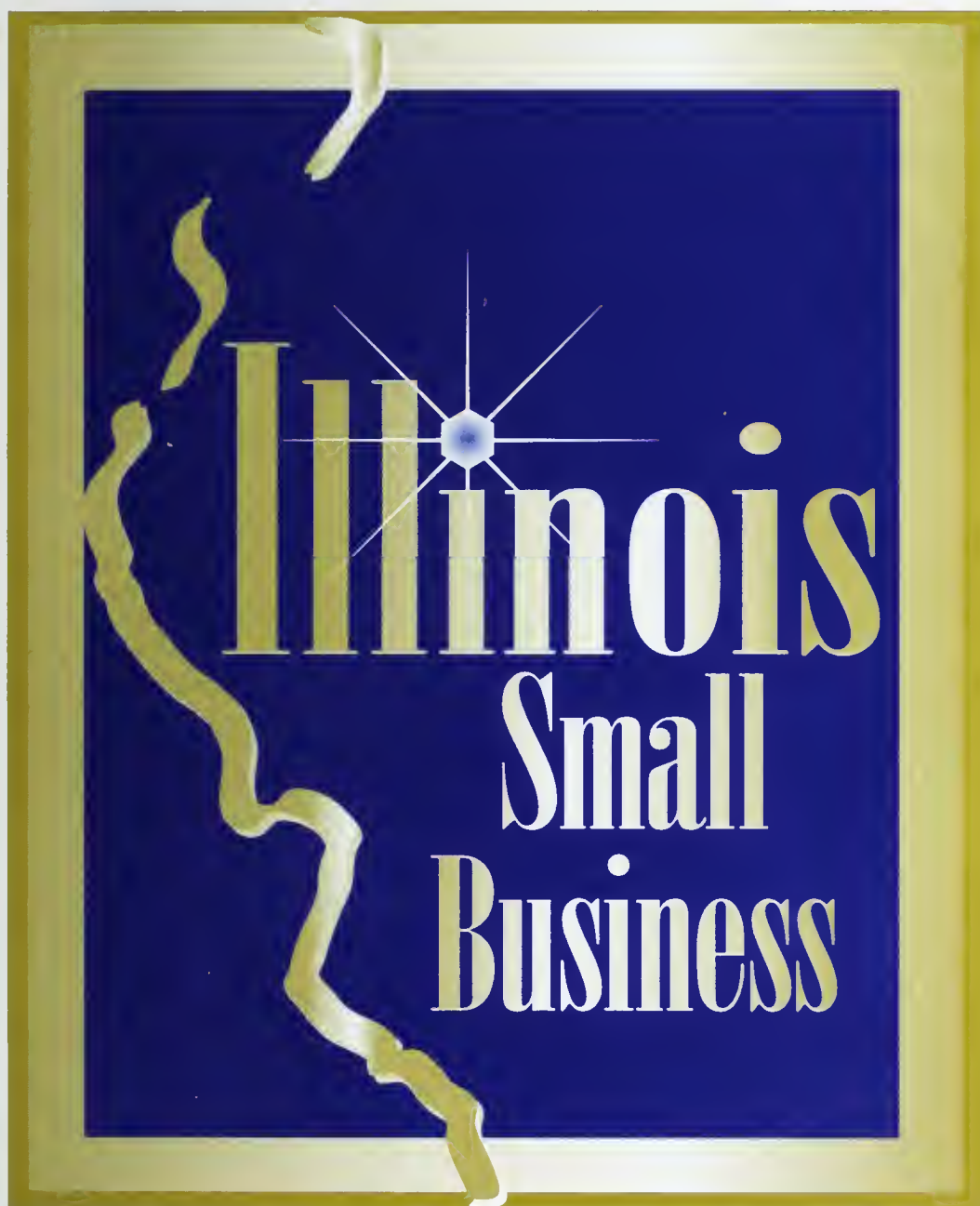


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Big Help For



Small Business Division
Bureau of Business Development
Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs

The Illinois Small Business Division of the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs (DCCA) offers Illinois' companies an invaluable business asset - resources. Developed by bringing together many of the state's business programs, the agency has become a common stop to entrepreneurs who are on their way to starting, expanding or entering new markets.

The Small Business Division, in partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration, provides prospective and existing business owners with a variety of business resource programs.

- ☆ Small Business Development Centers which provide businesses with management and marketing assistance and financial counseling.
- ☆ Procurement Technical Assistance Centers which assist existing business owners in doing business with the federal, state and local governments.
- ☆ International Trade Centers and NAFTA Opportunity Centers which provide existing business owners with professional advice and resources to help them enter the global marketplace.
- ☆ A Small Business Innovative Research Center which provides counseling, training and technical assistance to technology-oriented entrepreneurs to enhance their opportunities to compete for Federal research and development awards.
- ☆ Small Business Incubators which provide businesses with sheltered environments during the early stages of development.
- ☆ Targeted assistance for minority and women business owners.

- ☆ Services to ease small businesses through the regulatory requirements under federal environmental laws.
- ☆ A single, statewide resource to help businesses obtain comprehensive regulatory and permit information and referral assistance.

Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)

In cooperation with the U.S. Small Business Administration, SBDCs provide technical and management assistance through one-on-one counseling and group training sessions to potential as well as existing Illinois business owners. These services are offered by Centers located at community colleges, universities, chambers of commerce and business development organizations.

Services include:

- ☆ General Business Assistance
- ☆ Access to Management Resources
- ☆ Technical and Training Resources
- ☆ Marketing Information
- ☆ Financing Opportunities
- ☆ Assistance with Financial Analysis
- ☆ Business Education and Workshops
- ☆ Licensing Information
- ☆ Productivity Assessment

Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTAC)

PTAC provide detailed, comprehensive technical assistance to Illinois companies interested in selling their goods and/or services to various government entities.

Services include:

- ☆ providing help for Illinois companies to understand the procurement process.
- ☆ matching of the firm's product, manufacturing or service capabilities with major military and civilian buying agencies.
- ☆ providing assistance for the completion of bidder application forms.
- ☆ identifying defense and civilian agency contracting opportunities and providing automated bid matches to Illinois firms.
- ☆ providing specifications, standards, bar coding, packaging and other information needed to bid on government contracts.
- ☆ reviewing bid packages to ensure that the company understands the bid requirements.
- ☆ providing information on contract administration, quality assurance and other post-award assistance.
- ☆ Electronic Commerce/Electronic Data Interchange training.

International Trade Centers/NAFTA Opportunity Centers

International Trade Centers (ITC) provide assistance to the new-to-export businesses in Illinois. Two ITCs also serve as NAFTA Opportunity Centers (NOC). NOCs are specialized resource centers available to current and potential exporters and business assistance providers on export opportunities in Mexico and Canada.

Services include:

- ☆ international market research data to evaluate key overseas opportunities.

- ☆ identification of potential foreign buyers, agents and distributors through trade leads.
- ☆ information and training programs on export procedures, distribution, methods of payment and foreign business practices.
- ☆ an extensive collection of international trade reference materials.
- ☆ access to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs' International Business Division.

The strength of the ITCs and NOCs is the link between the rest of the Illinois Small Business Development Center Network and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs' International Business Division. This allows firms to receive a variety of export programs and services through a three-level export infrastructure comprised of local, state and overseas resources.

Small Business Incubators

The Illinois Small Business Incubator Program helped establish a network of 20 incubators throughout the state. Incubators provide prospective business owners with inexpensive space to lease, shared secretarial and administrative resources, and management support. Having helped hundreds of businesses get started, the incubators range from technology-specific to general use and offer an important and useful opportunity to start-up and early-stage companies.



**Small business is the
real muscle of the
Illinois economy.**

Eighty-five percent of the new jobs in Illinois were created by small businesses. Think about it. Nearly 4.4 million Illinoisans depend on small business for their livelihood.

To succeed in business today, small business owners have to wear many hats - that of a banker to secure financing, a marketing expert to reach potential clientele, an accountant to file a myriad of tax returns and the list goes on.

Fortunately for Illinois' 617,000 small business owners, assistance is readily available. Whether shopping for a marketplace, investigating financial sources or trying to make sense of tax requirements, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs can help.

How? Through the Illinois Small Business Division. What makes up the Small Business Division? It is comprised of 40 Small Business Development Centers, 14 Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, 5 International Trade Centers, 2 NAFTA Opportunity Centers, 20 Incubators, an Office of Minority Business Development, an Office of Women's Business Development, an Office of Small Business Environmental Assistance and the First Stop Business Information Center.

Business development centers counsel, conduct research, and train business people in a wide variety of business topics. They provide comprehensive information services and access to experts in many fields. Centers develop and maintain partnerships among community organizations and local, state and federal agencies, providing a focal point for broad networks of public and private resources at the community level. These partnership programs and activities serve small business and contribute significantly to the economic growth in Illinois.

Forget your preconceived notions about government. Shake off that I-don't-need-anybody's-help-especially-the-government's-help attitude. Take a few minutes out of what has to be a busy schedule and read on. It will change your company's future.

Office of Women's Business Development

The Office of Women's Business Development (OWBD) works with individual companies and women's professional associations to help female entrepreneurs tackle the wide range of problems they may encounter in their businesses. Additionally, OWBD is a valuable resource for prime contractors and corporations targeting this growing economic sector as potential vendors, partners and suppliers.

The Office provides information, referral and procurement assistance and serves as an information conduit to business resources throughout the state.

The Illinois Women's Network for Entrepreneurial Training (IWNET) program matches successful female entrepreneurs as mentors with women whose companies are ready to grow.

Staff from the OWBD serves on and provides administrative support to the Illinois Women's Business Ownership Council (IWBOC). This legislated Council is mandated to review and make recommendations to the Governor and the Illinois General Assembly on specific areas including: barriers to women-owned businesses; participation in the Illinois mainstream economy; the role of government in programming women-owned businesses; and the data review and availability of information on women-owned businesses.

Office of Minority Business Development

The Office of Minority Business Development (OMBD) serves to advocate for and enhance the growth impact of Illinois' minority entrepreneurs. Minorities are, as defined by state law, persons of African-American, Hispanic, Asian and American Indian backgrounds.

The Office of Minority Business Development program activities include representation and education on legislative matters, development of policy and inter-governmental advocacy activities and assistance with minority business and organizational self-help skills. The office also offers specific programs for the development of local minority business councils, mentor-protege matches and linkages of potential and established minority entrepreneurs to the Small Business Development Center Network. Two minority business advocates, including a bi-lingual liaison to the Hispanic business community, serve minority business populations and organizations throughout the state.

Minority business state contracting interests and goals are represented on the Illinois Business Enterprise Program for Minorities, Females and Persons with Disabilities.

Small Business Environmental Assistance Program

The Small Business Environmental Assistance Program offers services to ease small businesses through the regulatory requirements of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. All services are free and confidential.

Services include:

- ☆ a toll-free Small Business Environmental Assistance Helpline (800/252-3998) to answer companies' questions regarding environmental compliance issues.
- ☆ a free clearinghouse of over 300 easy to understand environmental publications.
- ☆ speakers on environmental issues.
- ☆ on-line environmental

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information available 24 hours a day through the Access Illinois computer bulletin board system.

Companies may gain access to program information on Access Illinois by dialing 217/785-6255 (Settings: ANSI 8,N,1).

The program may also be reached electronically at environmental.program@accessil.com.

First Stop Business Information Center

It's quick. It's simple. And it's free.

Now, Illinois has a single, statewide resource to help individuals and businesses obtain comprehensive regulatory and permit information and referral assistance. By making it easy for businesses to get the information they need, First Stop enhances the economic climate in Illinois and helps companies stay competitive.

How can First Stop help your business?

For start-up businesses: First Stop offers a detailed handbook, "Starting a Business in Illinois," that includes a feasibility checklist and business plan outline, as well as general business regulations and issues facing new business ventures. The handbook will be mailed free of charge upon request. Also, an abbreviated start-up guide is immediately available by fax.

For existing businesses: First Stop identifies applicable regulations and services. First Stop's database inventories business licenses, permits, certificates and registrations required by the State of Illinois.

For all businesses: First Stop offers a directory which identifies more than 500 requirements and assistance programs from more than 40 state agencies and constitutional offices. First Stop links your company to state services and assistance programs, from financing to free consulting, and provides information on how to apply for these programs.

Getting information from First Stop couldn't be easier:

Phone: 800/252-2923 (statewide, toll-free) to be connected with a knowledgeable business specialist who can answer your questions and provide additional information by fax or U.S. mail.

On line: Dial Access Illinois, 217/787-6255 (settings: ANSI,8,N,1) to receive the abbreviated "Guide to Starting a Business in Illinois and the Directory of Business Requirements and Assistance Programs". Use Internet e-mail to request a copy of the handbook or for other inquiries (first.stop@accessil.com).

Local access: For on-line access and helpful advice from small business experts, visit your local Small Business Development Center (SBDC). Call First-Stop for locations.

For more information about the programs of the Illinois Small Business Division call us at 312/814-3557 in Chicago or at 217/524-5856 in Springfield. For persons with hearing impairments our TDD number is 800/785-6055.

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